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ABSTRACT

An integrated reading program was developed and implemented to raise reading comprehension levels and attitudes toward reading in two groups of urban comprehensive high school students. A targeted group of 10th-grade English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students was established for the program with the objective to reduce reading deficits that ranged from .5 to 6.5 grade levels. The researcher-created Reading Enhancement and Achievement Delivery System (READS) program contained six strategies: (1) discussing students' attitudes and goals; (2) creating a positive environment; (3) sharing literature; (4) reading for an audience; (5) active learning; and (6) a computerized reading program. An average growth in reading comprehension of 14 to 16 months was determined and measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education over the 18-week period. A change in attitude was determined by a student attitudinal survey. It was concluded that by combining traditional reading strategies and computer-assisted instruction, students' reading comprehension levels and attitudes toward reading improved. (Two figures and two tables of data are included. Twenty-nine references and a 37-item bibliography are attached. Appendixes include the proposed timeline for the READS program, computer lab rules, progress reports, an attitude survey, and a letter of transmittal.) (Author/SR)

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AN INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAM TO IMPROVE TENTH GRADE ENGLISH STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION GRADE LEVELS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

by

Nancy C. Brenman

A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center
for the Advancement of Education of Nova University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a
National Database System for reference.

July/1990

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Signed:_____

I would also like to acknowledge both my mentor, Dr. Richard Johnson, and my advisor, Dr. Linda Gaughan. They have both been extremely helpful and supportive. Without them this practicum could not have been successful. I'd also like to acknowledge, my husband, Don Brenman, and sons for their support and cooperation. A very appreciative thanks is also acknowledged to Larry Mild for his expert wisdom and advice in computer technology.

Abstract

An Integrated Learning Program To Improve Tenth Grade English Students' Reading Comprehension Grade Levels and Attitudes Toward Reading
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Descriptors: Computer Assisted Instruction/ Computer Managed Instruction/ Reading Comprehension/Reading Strategies/ Reading Skills/Elementary Secondary Education/ Reading Attitudes/World Institute for Computer Assisted Teaching (WICAT)/

This report describes an integrated reading program developed and implemented to raise reading comprehension levels and attitudes toward reading in two groups of urban comprehensive high school students. A targeted group of tenth grade English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students was established for the program with the objective to reduce reading deficits that ranged from .5 to 6.5 grade levels. The researcher-created READS Program contained six strategies: discussing students' attitudes and goals, creating a positive environment, sharing literature, reading for an audience, active learning, and a computerized reading program. An average growth in reading comprehension of 14 to 16 months was determined and measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) over the 18 week period. A change in attitude was determined by a student attitudinal survey. It was concluded that by combining both traditional reading strategies and computer assisted instruction students' reading comprehension levels and attitudes toward reading improved. Appendices include the proposed timeline, computer lab rules, progress reports, an attitude survey, and a letter of transmittal.

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Practicum Title An Integrated Learning Program To Improve Tenth Grade English Students' Reading Comprehension Grade Levels and Attitudes Toward Reading

Student's Name Nancy C. Brenman

Program Site Hillsborough High School Date_____

Observer's Name_____
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Observer's position_____Phone #_____

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):_____

_____

_____

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Literacy is a main focus in education in America. Few jobs can be found today that do not require reading and comprehension skills. In addition, critical thinking skills, especially as found in reading and listening contexts are especially important for students today. No longer does the work place have foremen who stand over workers to direct each to a given task with verbal instructions.

The investigator serves as a full-time teacher of English in an urban comprehensive high school in a school district located in an urban area of a southeastern state. One thousand five hundred twenty students are enrolled at this school. The population consists of 50 percent Caucasian, 38 percent Black, 10 percent Hispanic/Black Hispanic, and two percent Asian/Native American students. There are five administrators, 113 classroom teachers, three full-time guidance counselors, one alternative education counselor, one counselor with the Compact program (an academic program for at-risk students), one human relations specialist, one occupational specialist, one

reading specialist, one speech therapist (two days a week), and one itinerant bilingual teacher. To motivate students and to facilitate learning through tutoring there are two assistant teachers connected with the Compensatory Education designation. The students also receive services from the System for Applied Individualized Learning (SAIL), (a tutorial program for students needing academic support), a school nurse, a school psychologist, a school social worker, and a counselor from the local drug rehabilitation center as well as a school resource officer.

The students in this large comprehensive high school come from a variety of backgrounds. About 50 percent of the parents are either blue collar workers, unemployed, welfare recipients, and/or single parents. Six hundred forty three students participate in the free and reduced lunch program.

Reading is the focal point of every dominant learning activity. It remains the primary subject taught in every learning center in this country, despite its perceived irrelevance to many lower income students from low income families.

The researcher is a tenth and eleventh grade English teacher. The responsibilities of the researcher include the teaching of literature, vocabulary, writing, grammar and other assigned activities within the parameters of the school. Reading is a prerequisite skill for all subject areas. This researcher has discovered through reading and observation that many students read below grade level. At the beginning of the 1989-90 school year some tenth grade students were reading as low as at third and fourth grade reading levels. This makes successful completion of tenth grade English requirements difficult. Also, the researcher has observed that many students dislike subjects that require reading. Likewise, students lack the necessary study skills and critical thinking and reading skills needed for success in school.

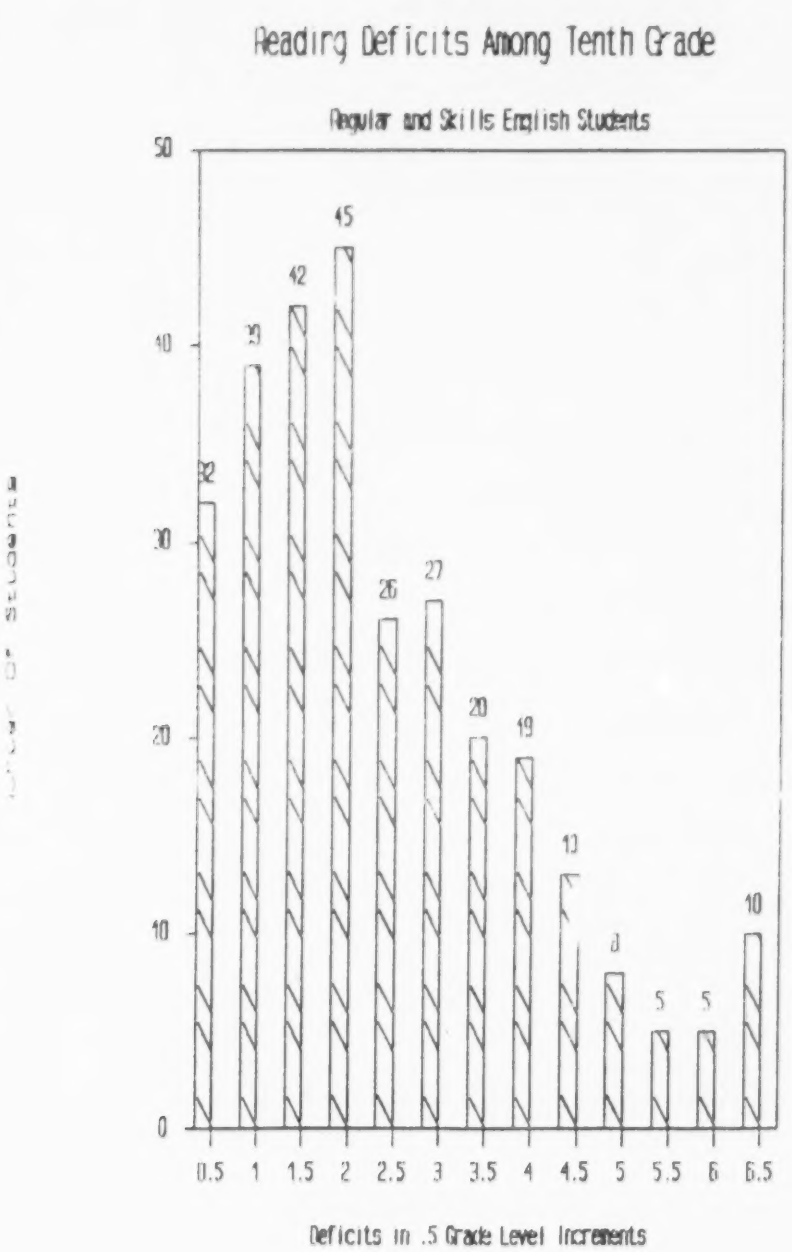
Problem Statement

Reading is required for every high school academic subject in America. The critical reading and thinking skills such as, recognizing inferences, distinguishing fact from opinion and problem solving are tested in all state assessment tests. Specifically, reading skills

are required for successful completion of the tenth grade English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills curricula. However, 291 students out of a total of 410 tenth grade students read below grade level as documented by the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). These 410 students were enrolled in either English 2 Regular or English 2 Skills classes designed for Regular and Basic Skills students. The English 2 Regular class is a tenth grade English requirement designed for students with a 31-75 percentile ranking as determined by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The purpose of this course is to provide instruction in English language skills and in the study of world literature. In contrast, the English 2 Skills class is designed for students who scored below the 30th percentile as determined by the CTBS. The purpose of the Skills class is to provide instruction in the basic language skills of reading and writing. Reading deficits in these classes range from one half of a grade level to six and a half years below grade level.

Figure one, below, summarizes these data.

Figure 1

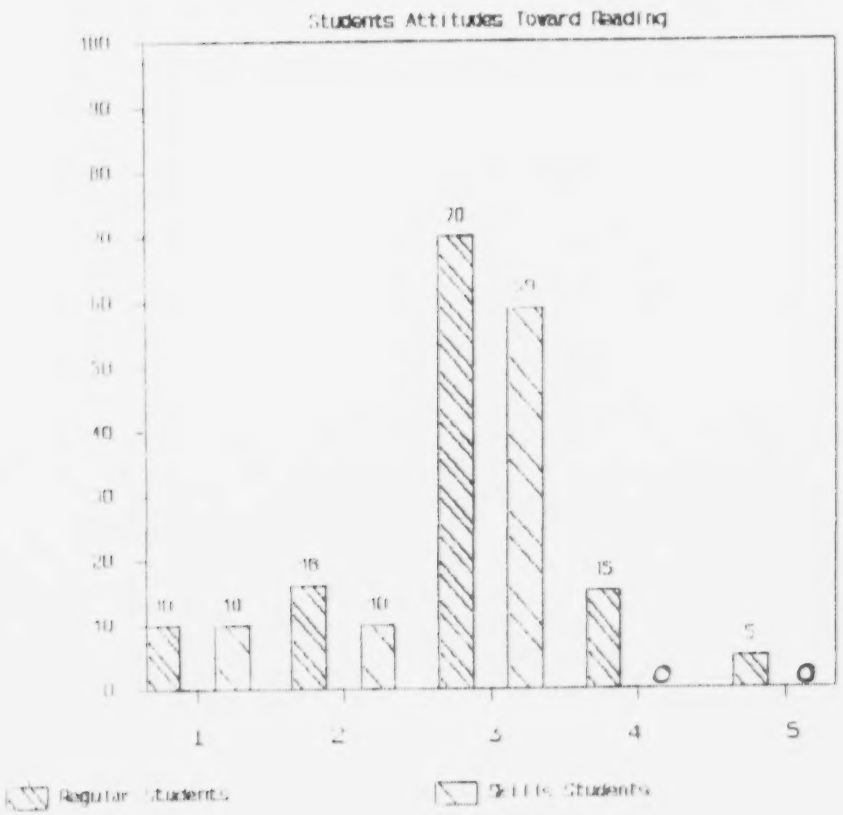


The discrepancy between the situation as it was and the situation as it should have been ranged from .5 grade level to 6.5 grade levels. A strong need existed to reduce this discrepancy and to enable students to approach appropriate grade level reading skills. There was strong agreement and a consensus among the tenth grade English teachers that students had negative attitudes toward reading achievement.

Student attitudes regarding reading among urban tenth grade students in English 2 Regular and Skills classes ranged from very positive to very negative according to a researcher-conducted attitude survey in which all tenth grade students were asked to rate attitude toward reading. Students were asked to rate the following statement using a five point Likert scale: "My attitude toward reading is_____." 5-Very Positive, 4-Positive, 3-Neutral, 2-Negative, 1-Very Negative. Figure two on page seven summarizes these data.

Figure 2

Tenth Grade Regular and Skills English



Educators expect that students should have attitudes toward reading that range from Neutral to Very Positive. Of the 195 tenth grade English 2 Regular students surveyed, 26 rated attitudes toward reading as Negative or Very Negative. Therefore, a class of 26 students would benefit from improved attitudes toward reading. Of the 93 tenth grade Skills students surveyed, 20 showed attitudes toward reading as Negative or Very Negative. Therefore, 20 Skills students would benefit from improved attitudes toward reading.

Outcome Objectives

According to research (Bloome, 1989), most high school students who read for recreational purposes confine reading to love stories and/or sports magazines; some read only when forced to do school assignments. Ewing (1977) says that parents rarely ask teenaged children questions regarding reading habits. Because of peer pressure, many high school students think it is not "hip" to be involved with activities that center around reading activities. In fact, many students will flatly disregard any gathering that involves or requires reading. Some studies (Bloome,

1989; Hawk, 1986) with reading as a focal point indicate that television, and not reading, has become the leading mode for learning among many teenagers. Thus, the need for improved reading ability and improved attitudes toward reading exists. The objectives of the project follow:

1. After participation in the 18 week "Reading Enhancement and Achievement Delivery System" (READS) program, 75 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Regular students will improve overall reading skills by eight months as measured by the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

2. After participation in the 18 week READS program, 75 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Skills students will improve overall reading skills by four months as measured by the TABE.

3. After participation in the 18 week READS program, 90 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Regular students will report a neutral or positive attitude toward reading as measured by a five point Likert Attitude Scale developed by the researcher.

4. After participation in the 18 week READS program, 80 percent of the targeted tenth grade English

2 Skills students will report a neutral or positive attitude toward reading as measured by a five point Likert Attitude Scale developed by the researcher.

5. After participation in the 18 week READS program, 100 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students will use technology to improve critical reading and thinking skills in the areas of recognizing inferences, distinguishing fact from opinion, and problem solving as measured by direct observation in the WICAT computer lab.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Introduction and Rationale

Reading is the "process of translating signs and symbols into meanings and incorporating new meanings into existing cognitive and affective systems" (Robeck and Wilson, 1974, p.41). Reading is "an interactive constructive process rather than a product-orientated sequential set of skills" (Strang, 1967, p. 11). According to these definitions, the reading process involves more than cognitive skills. According to Alexander (1976), "a more intangible affective component--attitudes--is also involved" (p. 4).

During the earliest part of an adolescent's formal education, emphasis is placed on reading, reading comprehension, and reading skills. Students are encouraged to read both in and outside of school. As students pass into middle school and junior high, less attention is paid to free reading, except for the usually hated book reports (Hawk, 1985). High school often concludes with reading a work by Shakespeare or Chaucer (Hawk, 1985). Hawk said that, during the process of education, students may become disenchanted

with reading (1985, p. 3). As professionals, teachers may be doing students a disservice by not trying to make students aware of the joys of being readers for life. This knowledge will enable students to realize the wonderful experiences and knowledge that can be gained through the printed word.

Bloome (1989) said educators know how important it is for students, or anyone else, to be lifelong readers. An article in Media and Methods by Lay (1979) cited the following frightening statistics from a survey by the National Opinion Research Center:

> 1. Citizens of the United States read fewer books than citizens of Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries.
> 2. Approximately 10 percent of our population reads approximately 80 percent of the books read.
> 3. About half the adult population of the United States has never completely read a book.
> 4. Fewer than 1 out of 5 adults could name a book they would like to read (p. 22).

A review of the following literature was conducted by the researcher: low achieving adolescent readers, attitudes toward reading, and comprehensive programs to improve both attitudes and reading skills of adolescent readers. Particular attention was paid

to the review of literature on Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Computer Managed Instruction (CMI). These particular excerpts are relevant to the problem under investigation. First, the problems of low achieving students will be discussed.

Low Achieving Students

One of the basic characteristics of low achieving teen readers is a lack of self-esteem. These students have one problem in common: they have experienced one failure after another because they cannot read well. Jenkins (1979) said that low achieving teens come from lower socioeconomic, single parent homes. These students have little interest or motivation to attend school. Thus, school attendance is erratic. The issues of socioeconomic status, the one parent family, erratic attendance, and lack of motivation have been the subject of a few studies (Alexander et al., 1976; Jenkins, 1979; Bucky, 1979; Phillips, 1979). Ingle (1989) said that students who have been labeled remedial/low achievers, and who show up on lists of students below standard, year after year, can perform at much higher levels and have much more ability than ever having been given credit for. Ingle stated that

so much potential has never been tapped, and that these students have grown lazy.

A good example of a type of program that was developed to emphasize the importance of building self-esteem in the low achiever was set up by Helmstetter (1987). After three months of positive reinforcement through varied activities an eighth grade class emerged from apathy to become a group of active learners. This program involved five main phases:

Phase 1. Discussing attitudes and goals
Phase 2. Positive Environment
Phase 3. Sharing literature through reading
Phase 4. Reading for an audience, and
Phase 5. Active learning.

Attitude Toward Reading

Many low achieving students are poor readers. These readers have low self-esteem as well as poor attitudes toward reading. According to Alexander et al., attitudes play a definite role in reading development (1976). There is a direct association between attitude and achievement. Lehr (1982) reported that in a review of the findings of the 1979-80 reading and literature assessment in the United States conducted by the National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP) that we might well be becoming a nation of "illiterate literates." As Huck, cited in Lehr (1982) described:

> If, we teach a child to read, yet develop not the taste for reading, all of our teaching is for naught. We shall have produced a nation of people who know how to read, but do not read (p. 8).

This NAEP assessment involved more than 100,000 students ages nine, 13, and 17 from all geographic areas and socioeconomic levels of the United States. The report investigated not only achievement levels in reading, but also reading habits, tastes, and attitudes toward print. Lehr reported the following NAEP conclusions:

> 1. about 105 of the students in each group did not read at all
> 2. less than half of the thirteen year olds and seventeen year olds reported that they liked to read "very much"
> 3. students liked reading less as they got older
> 4. almost half of the seventeen year olds chose reading as their least favorite leisure time activity
> 5. when the students read, it was for short periods of time
> 6. students valued reading as a source of information, not a source of pleasure or a means of understanding themselves or cultural values (1982, p. 80).

Attitude is "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the reader to approach or avoid a reading situation" (Alexander, 1976, p.8). The fostering of positive reading attitudes is one goal of reading instruction as stated in most reading texts and curriculum guides. However, few textbooks or curriculum guides explain exactly what a positive attitude is. This may be because many take the term to be self-explanatory, simply how one feels about reading.

Lewis et al., (1980) suggested "educators consider reading attitudes as a multi-dimensional construct with both cognitive and affective components" (p.187). The Lewis model of reading attitudes is made up of three factors. The first factor is the value placed on reading as an avenue of gaining insight into one's self. The second factor involves reading for achieving educational or vocational goals. The third important factor concerns the value one places on reading for pleasure. The researcher attempted to use part of this earlier model in creating a program for the improvement of students' attitudes toward reading.

There are many complexities that influence reading attitudes. Alexander, as cited in Lehr (1982), revealed that the way students feel about and value reading can be affected by several ingredients. These ingredients included the amount and kind of reading done by parents and peers. Also, the availability of reading materials in the home, and the value placed on reading by family and peers are largely beyond the control of the teacher. However, according to Flanders, as cited in Lehr (1982), classroom environment is directly related to the modeling of students' attitudes. Teacher behavior was related to both student attitude and achievement scores and scores were higher when teachers effectively praised and encouraged students. Scores were higher when teachers praised and encouraged students, used students' ideas and asked students questions rather than when teachers gave orders, criticized, or chiefly lectured (Lehr, 1982).

One of the primary factors contributing to low reading achievement is poor attitude toward reading (Estes, 1971). Estes (1971, p. 135) said, "How students feel about reading is as important as whether

they can read." Estes was one of the first to discuss how one measures change in attitude toward reading. He developed a "Likert" or "summated ratings" type of scale for teacher use. This type of scale was chosen because of its ease of use and high accuracy. A group of 27 high school and elementary teachers was chosen to contribute to an initial item pool. Two classrooms of pupils from third through twelfth grade were given the tryout scale. The data were analyzed in a two stage procedure. First, the general performance and second, an individual analysis of each item. The scale offered to teachers of reading a way to measure objectively how pupils felt about reading. It is possible to assess attitude toward reading in several ways (Epstein, 1980; Lehr, 1982; Ewing, 1977). In 1977, Ewing discussed many methods of attitude assessment as well as pros and cons. Attitude scales, self reports, interviews, and semantic differential techniques were discussed. Epstein (1980) provided a detailed discussion and range of assessment techniques.

Computer Assisted Instruction/Computer Managed Instruction (CAI/CMI) Programs to Improve Attitudes, Motivation, and Reading Skills

Educators continue to search for a method and/or methods to raise self-esteem, attitudes, and reading comprehension levels. Many types of methods have been used. Computer Assisted Instruction/Computer Managed Instruction is just one method that has been used with some promising results. The key may result in just the right combination of computerized and traditional classroom teaching.

In a civilization as diverse as the present, technological advances create waves through society. And when improvements happen along that make jobs easier, more effective, efficient, and enjoyable, it is the educator's obligation to combine research efforts with technology. The computer is no passing fancy; it, like the TV and VCR, is here to stay (Marcus, 1987, p. 90).

A major shift in the reading curriculum planning has been taking place over the last 10 years; and it needs to focus more on the individual, the reader, than on the reading situation or reading task. For the reading curriculum and indeed for classroom practice,

this means that greater attention must be given to pupil perceptions, willingness, and motivation (Ewing, 1977). If there is to be any further development in the reading curriculum, a new emphasis must be placed on the considerations which relate to children's attitudes and motivation.

One method of change is through computer assisted instruction/computer managed instruction (CAI/CMI). Bangert et al., (1985) stated that computers can help students develop self-esteem, increase motivation, and in turn improve reading skills. This review of the literature on CAI/CMI has revealed an extensive amount of published material both positive and negative on the extent of the computer's role in education. The growth of CAI/CMI in the schools has been rapid. The impact of computers in education has increased at an accelerating rate. School districts across the country have received pressure from parents and computer companies to put computers in every classroom (Karbal, 1985).

Programs for CAI/CMI teaching have come a long way in the 20 years since they were first developed (Kulik et al., 1983). Teachers who were once skeptical about

the use of computers are slowly beginning to realize the computers' potential. To illustrate the growing use of computers at the elementary and secondary levels, Kloosterman et al., (1988) wrote "the number of computers in use quadrupled from about 250,000 to over one million between spring 1983 and spring 1985." (p. 19).

As Bork (1987) stated, this growing use of computers is not likely to be short lived:

> Indications are that the computer's importance in education will continue to grow. The sudden emergence of a dozen or so magazines concerned with computers in education and the entry of many publishers into this market show that the movement has gained momentum (p. 20).

This growth in the use of CAI is supported by considerable optimism in the literature concerning its effectiveness. For example, in a study conducted by Kulik in 1983 the author maintained that students who were taught on computers developed very positive attitudes toward the computer and positive attitudes toward the courses they were taking. Also, the computer reduced substantially the amount of time that students needed for learning. This research used

quantitative techniques, or meta-analysis, to integrate findings from 51 independent evaluations of computer based teaching in grades 6 to 12. The analysis showed that computer based teaching raised students' scores on final examinations by about .32 standard deviations or from the 50th to the 63rd percentile, however, follow-up exam scores given several months after the computer instruction revealed less positive effects.

The research done by Kulik served as a cornerstone for much of the argument that computers are viewed as valuable tools for teaching and learning. Kulik claimed computer based education can produce positive effects on the achievement of elementary students (1983); CAI can produce large savings in instruction time (1983); CAI fosters positive attitudes toward computers (1983); and in general, computers can be used to help learners become better readers, calculators, writers, critical readers, thinkers, and problem solvers (1983).

In addition, a survey of computer use in schools in three Western states (Long, 1985) reported advantages of computer use that are typically cited, including a clear increase in students' self-esteem,

enhanced feelings of success, and increased motivation. However, in contrast, Ngaiyaye (1986) said that the extent of the importance of computer programs on learning is a question yet to be fully explored. Specifically, what needs to be determined is whether or not the use of CAI does motivate a desire for greater achievement levels of students, particularly the educationally disadvantaged.

Solution Strategy: The READS Program

Three solution strategies were chosen to raise self-esteem, attitudes toward reading, and reading comprehension levels. The investigator tried to raise self-esteem in the below grade level achieving reading student through a slightly changed six phase plan as set up by Helmstetter (1987). Many methods of positive reinforcement and a system of rewards were used to foster a positive learning environment. Attitudes toward reading were discussed. Topics of discussion included: reading avoidance, reading for information, reading as recreation, and reading as an important part of future employment. Activities, such as questionnaires, discussions, and brainstorming were used.

A positive environment was implemented by the investigator through setting a stage that enabled each student to believe in success. Opportunities to share literature through oral reading were provided as well as opportunities to read silently. The investigator asked the students to write answers to questions that focused on application, analysis, and synthesis along with assignments to reinforce critical thinking skills. Nicholls, as cited in Helmstetter (1987), said that when the emphasis is on understanding a task and learning from it rather than on performing well, students will naturally be drawn to more difficult tasks and even attain a sense of satisfaction. The researcher and the other instructors involved in this project expected that students involved in this study would improve reading levels and attitudes toward reading. The belief has a basis that when a student improves a skill, the student feels more comfortable and happy about becoming involved in that type of activity, as well as, the philosophy that in setting high standards students will strive to meet those standards.

Reading for an audience was the next phase of the solution strategy. In this phase students were encouraged to read plays aloud as well as write paragraphs to share with peers. The next phase gave the students an opportunity to become active learners through writing original plays and video taping the results. The last phase was a series of lectures and discussions conducted by invited quests from the world of work to explain to the students why reading and comprehension skills are required for gainful employment.

In addition to these earlier activities the World Institute for Computer Assisted Teaching (WICAT) laboratory reading program was used as an integral part of the solution strategy. This program was investigated in a report conducted by a county school board, department of testing and evaluation (1988). According to this study and another reported in The Michigan Reading Journal, the Individual Reading Instruction System (I.R.I.S.), developed by WICAT, in Provo, Utah, is an exceptional reading program (Mys and Petrie, 1989). This program is a comprehensive computerized program written by reading educators and

professionals. The program is continually being monitored and updated with new programs. It is written in the form of a series of newspaper stories. The activities offered fall into six comprehension groups: drawing inference, deleting unnecessary information, constructing logical arguments, developing critical thinking skills, using new vocabulary and using study skills to investigate the reading materials further. The critical thinking skills of organizing data, evaluating data, and judging sources are a very integral part of the WICAT lab. According to Devine, "there is research evidence that some skills associated with critical thinking, especially some related to critical listening, can be taught successfully" (1981, p. 101). The investigator used the WICAT lab two days a week as an instrumental part of the solution strategy.

CHAPTER III

Method

Resources

During the 18 week implementation period, 30 targeted students met with an instructor/instructors for 50 minutes daily. The assigned investigation took place in a variety of settings: the classroom, the library, and the WICAT computer lab. The WICAT lab was chosen as just one of the settings to conduct the assigned investigation because of its uniqueness and its ability to individualize instruction. The researcher had adequate room and facilities, for example, a computer for each student to have "hands on" experience as well as the use of the library for guest speakers and the awards party.

The WICAT laboratory is kept operational by two people, the reading specialist who serves as the director and another person who serves as lab manager. The investigator functioned as a guide and facilitator to organize, operate, and direct the developmental learning process during the planned project. The investigator arranged for the 30 targeted English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students to use the WICAT

laboratory in cooperation with the assistant principal for curriculum, lab manager, and other teachers involved in the project. The proposed timeline for the READS program (Appendix A: 51) was strictly adhered to.

The WICAT laboratory was an excellent area to conduct an investigation of this type. It is approximately 850 square feet in size, with good ventilation (air conditioned) and carpeted to reduce excessive noise. Black construction paper was used on the windows to block out the sun's glare. The personnel assigned to the lab, along with the teachers involved, helped to control any discipline problems that might arise; however, the ultimate responsibility for discipline was in the teachers' hands. Every attempt at appropriate discipline was made providing an atmosphere conducive for optimum learning. Seating charts were established as well as lab rules (Appendix B: 54). Space was adequate for comfortable practice. Students were spaced at every other computer which helped to reduce noise and distractions. Scores were recorded for computer lessons completed on a weekly basis and feedback was given as soon as students entered the classroom on the following day after

computer instruction. Progress charts were completed by the students (Appendix C: 56), and students' weekly grades were recorded and averaged by the teacher as part of the nine weeks grade. Incentives for high grades, effort, participation, and work accomplished proved to be motivating factors for some students during the program. For example, tickets to a local tourist attraction, movie tickets, gift certificates, and a $50.00 savings bond were used to encourage students to excel in all aspects of the READS program. Special certificates were issued to all participants at the end of the implementation period.

Ideally, the READS program set aside two days a week for computer lab instruction, however, in reality the targeted group used the lab on an average of once a week for the 15-18 week implementation period. This irregularity was due to a variety of reasons: four day weeks, unscheduled assemblies, computer failure, and disciplinary reasons. The targeted group was expelled from the lab for two weeks by the lab manager because one day in the investigator's absence a student wrote an obscene message about the lab manager on a monitor. However, the problems were resolved and the targeted

group was allowed to return to the WICAT lab. The investigator learned that events may occur that are out of the investigator's control; also, before entering any type of group project the investigator needs to summon the cooperation of all the professionals involved.

The implementation involved a flexible learning module (the READS program) developed by the researcher that was designed to be sufficient to meet the academic and attitudinal needs of each of the students participating in the study. Each module in the WICAT lab included activities that fell into the six comprehension groups: deletion, hypotheses testing, inference, critical thinking skills, graph interpretation, and the Cloze placement story finder test. Within the flexible planned module (READS program) were scheduled lectures, lessons, writing practice, oral reading, and informative discussions for optimum student growth and attitudinal enhancement.

Community Resources

Three representatives from the world of work were invited to explain to the students why reading and comprehension skills are required for gainful

employment in society. Each person invited to speak before the practicum participants was sent a letter duly informing the speaker of the occasion, possible topics, dates, and proper time scheduled. The speakers were requested to include a period of time for questions and answers. The time regarding class schedules was given top priority. Several persons were asked to serve as stand by speakers if a scheduled guest could not make an appearance. The timeline of the project required a rigid schedule to be followed. Follow-up class discussions were planned to obtain pupil input and questions regarding the speaker's topic.

Monitoring

Throughout the investigation, much care was exercised by the researcher to monitor the practicum at different intervals, making adjustments according to test results, pupil behavior, and suggestions from administrators and experts. The practicing experts were constantly informed at intervals of progress made. The growth exhibited by pupil responses indicated how rewarding the adjustments were. The practicum mentor and advisor were consulted at intervals to maintain

flexible plans for optimum learning activities. A log/diary was kept by the investigator of observable attitudinal and behavioral changes in the targeted group of students. Formative tests were administered to students periodically for the detection of needs and alteration in planning. Test results and input provided data to determine any changes needed in the instructional module. Constant monitoring was in operation by making mid-course changes when necessary. Weekly computer printouts were printed at the end of each week to measure student progress. Formal evaluations were accomplished through the WICAT integrated learning system. Bimonthly student data were made available to students in the form of a wall chart. These were the monitoring devices used throughout the implementation process.

Evaluation

According to Dumas, "evaluation refers to a full examination of the degree to which the specified outcome objectives have been achieved" (1990, p. 62). The researcher evaluated three different but related concepts. The investigator administered several types of pre- and posttests. The investigator pretested all

English 2 Skills and English 2 Regular students by asking one question: My attitude toward reading is _____? One hundred ninety-five students rated attitudes on a 5-1 Likert type scale. The results of the pre-survey can be found in Figure 2, page seven. The post student attitudinal survey (Appendix D: 58) was constructed by the investigator and was a Likert type attitudinal scale questionnaire. The students responded to the 14 questions divided into four categories: reading avoidance, references, recreational reading, and future employment. The responses on the survey instrument were determined by two scales: very often, often, sometimes, not often, never; and, very true, true, not true/not false, false, very false. The questionnaire was designed to require a minimum amount of time for response. The instrument was purely a research edition; no validity or reliability was established.

The data were collected from the pre- and posttests, tabulated and analyzed after each administration and the number of students choosing each category (very true to very false) was determined. In addition to the pre- and post attitude surveys

evaluation continued. The investigator administered a pre- and post reading test (TABE) and determined reading comprehension grade levels. Scores from the posttest were compared to scores from the pretest to discover if the objectives were met. The first two objectives would be met if the targeted English 2 Regular students improved reading skills by eight months or more, and if the English 2 Skills students improved by four months or more. Objectives number three and four would be met if 90 and 80 percent of the English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students, respectively showed improved attitudes toward reading as measured by the Likert type scale. A score of 3.1 or above would reflect a positive attitude. The final critical thinking skills objective was evaluated by direct observation of student work in the WICAT lab.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the results of the investigation and list the major findings. Specifically, this investigation was done to assess and improve reading comprehension skills and attitudes toward reading. The program participants were a combination of 30 English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students assigned to an urban comprehensive high school in a southeastern state. This study was conducted during the spring semester of the 1989-1990 academic school year. The study was begun to determine if the READS program as developed by the researcher in combination with the WICAT computerized reading program would provide a positive direction for student reading and comprehension skills and attitudes toward reading for academic achievement and ultimately future employment and improved self concept.

Objective number one was met when 75 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Regular students improved reading skills by eight months as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test. Table 1 on page thirty six summarizes these results.

Table 1

TABE Reading/ Pre and Posttest Results
for 15 English 2 Regular Students

Student #	Pretest	Posttest	Increase
1	8.2	8.2	0.0
2	12.9	12.9	0.0
3		7.3	0.0
4	10.6	10.6	0.0
5		9.0	0.0
6	9.0	12.9	3.9
7	11.7	12.9	1.2
8	10.8	11.7	0.9
9	8.0	9.0	1.0
10	5.1	6.5	1.4
11	9.6	9.0	-0.6
12		12.9	0.0
13	10.8	11.7	0.9
14		9.6	0.0
15	10.6	10.8	0.2

Average increase: 1.4 (1 year 4 months)

Table 2

TABE Reading/Pre and Posttest Results
for 10 English 2 Skills Students

Student #	Pretest	Posttest	Increase
16	8.6	9.0	0.4
17	6.9	8.6	1.7
18	6.1	6.9	0.8
19	7.8	7.8	0.0
20	9.0	9.0	0.0
21	7.7	9.0	1.3
22	8.9	6.5	-0.4
23	5.9	6.1	0.2
24	6.3	8.7	2.4
25	6.7	6.1	-0.6

Average increase: 1.2 (1 year 2 months)

The following comments contribute to the understanding of the results of the investigation. The average increase in reading comprehension skills for the English 2 Regular students was 16 months. At the beginning of the spring semester seven of the targeted English 2 Regular students were transferred into other classes and four new students were transferred into the targeted group. The loss of seven students and the entrance of four new students changed the classroom environment. The investigator needed to reestablish rapport, classroom rules, and retrain to begin the implementation process. In four of the cases the TABE pretest was not administered, making it impossible to compare pre- and posttest scores. Also, several of the students were repeatedly absent and/or skipping school making it extremely difficult for the researcher to establish program continuity. Three students withdrew from school during the implementation process. Therefore, when analyzing the results of the posttest it would be safe to say that students that did not excel did not due to excessive absenteeism. This would explain some of the zeros in the results. Also, for the targeted students achieving 12.9 on the pretest the

TABE test is unable to assign any score higher than 12.9. In summary, objective number one was met because the average in reading comprehension skills exceeded eight months.

Objective number two was met when 75 percent of the targeted tenth grade English 2 Skills students improved reading skill by four months as measured by the TABE test. The average increase in reading comprehension skills for the English 2 Skills students was 14 months. The two students that did not increase reading comprehension levels did not due to lack of motivation and effort. The two students who received a negative increase in reading comprehension levels were absent during the implementation process. In summary, objective number two was met because the average increase in reading comprehension skills exceeded four months.

Objectives numbers three and four were met when 90 percent of the English 2 Regular students and 80 percent of the English 2 Skills students showed improved attitudes toward reading by scoring 3.1 or above on the student attitudinal Likert type scale questionnaire.

The final objective concerned the use of technology to improve critical reading and thinking skills in the areas of recognizing inferences, distinguishing fact from opinion, and problem solving. All the participants in the study were required to use computers and specialized computer programs in order to improve these skills. Objective number five was met through direct observation of the participants in the WICAT computer lab.

In summary, all of the objectives of the study were met: students improved comprehension reading levels as well as attitudes toward reading. In conclusion, the results of this study based on the data accumulated and analyzed presented evidence to suggest four major conclusions. First, the students that responded to the survey indicated a growth in the awareness of the importance of reading and reading comprehension. Second, the students involved in the study now possess attitudes in a more positive direction toward reading and how it relates to future achievement. Third, most of the students considered good reading and comprehension skills an investment for the future. Finally, the results gained from

observation indicated positive attitudes gained for reading and computer learning activities; some students excelled with computer instruction while others fought it and were slow to realize its potential.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The investigator feels that much needs to be done to eliminate absenteeism, to build self-esteem, and motivate both secondary students and teachers toward new types of learning procedures. The county in which this project was implemented had discussed the importance of attitudes toward reading as well as the need to raise student comprehension reading grade levels for the past year. Therefore, this project has county-wide implications. The high school in which this project was implemented has hired three reading teachers for the 1990-1991 school year. This project will be disseminated to the reading teachers. Also, a copy of the report will be placed in the principal's office.

The READS program can be used by other junior high and high school English teachers interested in raising comprehension skills and in improving student attitudes toward reading. This study could be replicated with students of varying gender, ethnicity, religious preference, and age to determine if significant interactions exist. Also, the difference in attitudes

of low-income and middle-income families toward reading and comprehension skills could be examined.

In addition, the project generated more data regarding the effects of CAI/CMI on reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading in two groups of high school English students. The investigator recommends that both teachers and students continue to investigate the future and the potential uses of computerized learning. The investigator predicts that computer technology will revolutionize the way students learn in the future. Educators and professionals have just begun to tap computerized learning and its possibilities.

The investigator's final recommendations for the repetition of this study are to use a larger targeted group of students, offer more awards for efforts made, and extend the length of time for the study. Also, new computer reading programs with high interest levels to teens need to be written and included in the WICAT computer lab.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Proposed Timeline

Appendix A

Proposed Timeline for READS Program

Week One	Meeting with English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills teachers re: TABE and Survey testing
Week Two	Administer TABE test to all English 2 Regular and 2 Skills students
Week Three	Administer pre-survey questions to all English 2 Regular and English 2 Skills students
Week Four	Tabulate results of both TABE and Survey tests Meet with: mentor school reading resource specialist WICAT lab manager Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) project director
Week Five	Meet with principal and assistant principal to discuss READS program
Week Six	Set stage for positive reinforcement Conduct class discussion on attitudes toward reading Students receive letter of transmittal (Appendix E: 62) and complete questionnaire Speaker number one presents
Week Seven	Begin first week in WICAT lab every Tuesday and Friday for 50 minutes All students take Cloze Test in lab Computer printout on class/student averages printed at the end of each week as part of the evaluation process
Week Eight	Continue WICAT lab every Tuesday/Thursday

Week Nine	Motivational speaker number two In class begin writing and sharing
Weeks 10-12	WICAT lab Tuesday/Friday In class continue writing and sharing
Week 13	WICAT lab Tuesday/Friday Begin oral reading of plays
Weeks 14-15	WICAT lab Oral reading of plays continues
Weeks 16-17	WICAT lab Play writing and video taping Speaker three presents
Week 17	Administer Posttests TABE/Student Attitudinal Survey (Appendix D: 58)
Week 18	Tabulate results of TABE/Survey Awards Party/Pizza Party

Appendix B

Lab Rules

Appendix B

Lab Rules:

1. No gum, or food or drink.
2. Touch only your keyboard.
3. Raise your hand when you need help.
4. No talking.
5. Always ESC before leaving.
6. No pens, only pencils.
7. Please push in chairs before leaving.
8. Put all belongings under your chair.
9. Throw all scrap paper in trash.
10. You and only you are ultimately responsible for your assigned terminal.
11. Infractions of these rules may result in disciplinary action.

Appendix C

Progress Chart

Appendix C

Progress Chart

PROGRESS CHART

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY	Date Compl.	Score	Date Compl.	Score

Appendix D

Student Attitudinal Survey

Appendix D

Student Attitudinal Survey

Please respond to the following statements in the manner which you prefer. There are no correct answers nor incorrect answers. THIS IS NOT A TEST. No names are needed. The information gathered from this survey will be tabulated and analyzed for research purposes only.

PLEASE respond by circling the statement that is the BEST response for you.

I. **READING AVOIDANCE**

1. I refuse to do homework assignments because of the reading activities involved.

VERY OFTEN OFTEN SOMETIMES NOT OFTEN NEVER

2. I invent ways to do school assignments with the help of others in order to keep my problems in reading hidden.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

3. I generally dislike language, science, and history courses because of the reading exercises that are required.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

4. Reading aloud is difficult for me because I fear making mistakes in front of others.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/ NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

5. I only pick up my books the night before assignments are due.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/ NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

6. I have no idea where my books are within a weeks time of a new semester.

VERY OFTEN OFTEN SOMETIMES NOT OFTEN NEVER

II. **REFERENCES**

7. I dislike required visits to the library.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/ NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

8. Dictionaries and encyclopedias are seldom used by me without specific instructions to do so.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE /NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

9. I realize that reading skills become less difficult the more I read.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

III. **RECREATIONAL READING**

10. I would read more if the reading activities were centered around my particular interests.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

11. Students generally have a better self-concept when they gain more comprehension through independent reading activities.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

IV. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

12. Students seldom realize how difficult tests can be without good reading skills.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

13. The ability to read well generally determines one's level of employment.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/ NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

14. To plan for a professional career I must be able to read and comprehend well.

VERY TRUE TRUE NOT TRUE/NOT FALSE FALSE VERY FALSE

Appendix E

Letter of Transmittal

Appendix E

Letter of Transmittal

Dear Student,

You are living in a wonderful period of our country's progress. We should be happy that we can look beyond many virulent diseases that plagued our country and the world for so long. We can concentrate on making our lives more rewarding and fruitful. This can be done by reading and learning more wonderful things that this world has in store for us. You are being asked to take a little time and respond to this survey that is attached to this letter.

There are no correct or incorrect responses. Answer according to the way that you feel concerning each statement. No names are necessary. There will be no grades given, nor special promotions as a result of the survey. The information gathered will be tabulated and utilized only for an investigative study. Welcome to the wonderful world of reading and much success with your growth from your participation.

Thank you,

Mrs. N. Brenman

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 21,1991